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PAYMENT TO CONTRIBUTORS

To encourage reader of Panchayati Raj to share with their friends their thoughts, experiences and achievements in the field of Community Development, Cooperatives and Panchayats, it has been decided to pay for letters and contributions appearing in this journal with effect from March, 1961. The payment will be made at the rate of Rs. 5 for each letter and about Rs. 10 for each accepted article...Readers are requested to write articles and letters on subjects of common interest and to address them to:

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New Delhi.

Glimpses of Panchayati Raj

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Vishnu Dutt

DURING THE RECENT debate on Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan Assembly, several members pointed out that the Panchayats were in dire need of finance and that they could not achieve substantial results because of lack of it. What is true of Panchayats in Rajasthan perhaps is equally true of Panchayats in other parts of the country, too.

MOST SURPRISING

It needs no prophets to tell us that the Panchayats in the absence of adequate financial resources, cannot discharge satisfactorily the heavy burden of duties and responsibilities in connection with Social Welfare and development that have devolved on them as a result of the Panchayati Raj. This should be obvious to even the most casual observer of our scheme. It is, therefore, most surprising why attention has not been paid so far to this all-important question of building up the financial capacity of the Panchayats. In fact, one of the primary criteria of judging the success or failure of the Panchayats is how far they are able to carry on the development works from within their own resources without depending on Government grants.

TAXATION

Taxation, direct or indirect is the time-worn device adopted by sovereign governing bodies to augment their financial resources. The Panchayats, too, have been authorised to levy taxes on various subjects ranging from hearth to cattle fair including different trades, professions, and transport etc. The Panchayats have sufficient freedom to exercise their choice in levying taxes. Some of them have proved very imaginative in as much as they have sought to tax the money-lender and the lawyer who in the past have perhaps received more than given back to the community. The taxation spheres of the elective bodies at various levels of the village, the Block and the Panchayat have to be clearly demarcated so that these do not cut each other's course and cause avoidable friction and annoyance between them.

Experience has shown that, by and large, the Panchayats have been rather hesitant in levying the taxes they are otherwise entitled to. And the reason: that by so doing they will become unpopular! Indeed the Panchayats will have to learn their first lesson in democracy by being bold and courageous enough to do their duty, no matter howsoever thankless and unpleasant that may be. The Panchayats as well as other voluntary organisations should try to educate the electorate along right lines and impress upon them the fact that if they mean business they must be prepared for more taxes. In this context, it is a most welcome piece of news that Piprali Panchayat Samiti in Rajasthan has invited public objections to its proposal to levy taxes on professions ranging from money-lending to medical practice. Carpenters, confectioners, tailors, gold smiths, masons and petty traders will all be covered by the levy. Also taxes on camel, bullock carts, motor vehicles, flour mills and liquor shops are proposed. It is a step in the right direction and we do hope that more Samitis, particularly the Village Panchayats will follow suit.

CONSCRIPTING LABOUR

In view of poor financial conditions of the various sections of the rural society, it may not be possible to mop up sizeable resources through taxation. However, there are abundant manpower resources lying idle in the village which can be harnessed for the good of the Community. The Panchayats may, therefore, consider the desirability of conscripting a few days' labour in a year of every adult person living in the

village. This will be a more systematic and dependable method than that of voluntary *shramdan* for executing various community works like School-buildings, Roads, Community Centres, etc.

LAND REVENUE

Other permanent and assured sources of income can also be tapped for the Panchayats. One of the most outstanding of these is the land revenue. Various State Governments have set apart a certain percentage of their land revenues for being ploughed back to the Panchayats. The process should present no administrative difficulty particularly in view of the fact that the Panchayats in some of the States are being increasingly entrusted with the task of land revenue collection. The All India Panchayat Parishad, at its third annual conference held recently, has urged upon the State Governments to allocate 100% land revenue to the Panchayats. This deserves serious consideration.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Other fruitful sources of income are the community assets like fishery tanks, irrigation tanks and village forests. These should be built up on a priority basis. It will be worthwhile if the Panchayats took steps to improve pasture lands by enforcing rotational grazing and charging fees for grazing of cattle. In the recent past, the village forest lands have been greatly denuded of trees. This has resulted in acute shortage of fuel wood, thus aggravating the burning of cowdung as fuel instead. If the forests are properly planted and maintained, this will not only increase the sources of income to the Panchayats but help conservation of cowdung as compost manure to enrich the soil fertility.

The more enterprising . of the village Panchayats can bring common cultivable land under cooperative farming and thus add to their sources of income. Consumers' stores, and industries run efficiently on cooperative lines can be a good source of income and profit, and the money saved can be easily diverted to Panchayat Funds for being spent on common welfare activities. In Rajasthan and other places, the Panchayats by taking on themselves the Insurance and Small Savings work have added a good bit of income to their meagre resources. These and many more avenues of income can be thrown open to Panchayats for building up their financial assets.

HOW TO MAKE BEST USE OF COWDUNG ?

Some times back we had initiated a discussion in our journal under this column. We are publishing below views on the subject received from Dr. R. V. Tamhane, Head of the Division of Chemistry and Soil Science in the I.A.R.I. and Shri A.B. Ghosh.—**Editor.**

THE COLOSSAL national waste being carried on as a result of burning of cowdung by the villagers can be effectively prevented only if a suitable fuel substitute is provided to them. In cowdung gas plant we have an ideal fuel substitute. Yet even this is not catching on. Earlier, Shri Vidur writing under this Column, had rightly drawn attention towards the necessity of analysing the causes which are holding up its popularity amongst the masses. This problem when examined in its true perspective reveals the following salient facts.

WHY UNPOPULAR?

(1) The initial cash investment of Rs. 500 or so may not be possible for the majority of farmers. As the return from the gas plant is spread over years, even if a farmer has the resources, he feels hesitant to invest his money.

(2) There is inadequate arrangement for technical assistance and servicing facilities such as can reach all corners. When a farmer spends his hard-earned money on a gas plant he naturally expects the work to be carried out under proper expert supervision, by people who know the job. Sometimes, the gas plant fails to work due to slight defects but the farmer does not like to set right things himself lest there may be further damage. Unless such defects are set right immediately, not only the owner of the plant but also the community or the village develops an apathy towards the gas plant.

(3) Considerable amount of education and training for the appreciation of the value and utility of the cowdung gas plant to the individual, the community and the country as a whole are often necessary to convince many farmers. Such jobs can be efficiently handled only through the net-work of a competent extension organisation.

(4) Quite often, gas plants meant for demonstration are installed hurriedly without taking into consideration several important factors such as selection of a suitable site, availability of sufficient dung and water and particularly the interest of the farmers.

(5) The rate of gas production goes down with cold temperature. Also the presence of carbon dioxide in the gas lowers its calorific value and efficiency as a fuel. Such drawbacks inherent in the working of the gas plant cannot be overlooked, even if they may not be of very serious nature.

POPULARISING GAS PLANT

The cowdung gas plant cannot create wonders but it has all the potentialities for changing the pattern of rural life, hygiene and conserving dung for manurial purposes. The scope can further be enlarged by which all sorts of farm and household wastes and even night-soil can be digested to produce combustible gas and rich manure.

Whereas large plants using all sorts of refuse materials may be run on community or co-operative basis, individual or small groups of families can take up smaller plants. They need to be popularised not only through propaganda but also by actually inducing the farmers to go in for them. Efforts should be made to reduce the cost of the plant. More than half of the cost of the gas plant goes towards that of gas drum and metallic components. If these parts can be made available at controlled rates and fabrication carried out in Government or co-operative workshops the overall cost of a plant can be reduced by not less than 150 rupees, which means more than 25 per cent saving in the capital outlay.

Mysore's Progress

Sir,

ON PERUSAL of the various issues of Panchayati Raj, I take it that the Panchayats in Rajasthan and other places have been doing good work since the introduction of the three-tier system of democratic Government. The panchayats have, by and large, taken strides in the field of Agriculture and compost making, as also in Cooperation.

But the same cannot be said of panchayats in Mysore State. Ever since the introduction of Panchayati Raj here, about a year ago, no new life seems to have been awakened as a result of this new revolution. This may be due to lack of sufficient administrative and technical guidance from the top. The officials are still in the process of framing budgets and drawing up programmes, etc.

The working of panchayats in this State can be made effective if adequate educated personnel is appointed at the panchayat level to act as liaison between the panchayats and the Taluk Boards. The panchayat staff should be imparted training in Community Development and should be supplied suitable follow-up literature on the subject from time to time. Besides, the village leaders may be encouraged to conduct some symposia and discussions amongst themselves. This will stimulate in them an interest for the new set-up and thus pave way for its success.

12-3-61 Yours etc.
Chitradurga *K. S. Hirayannaish*
(Mysore State)

Balancing of Power

Sir,

There is no cut and dried formula to determine where and how far power should be delegated to make the scheme of democratic decentralisation a success. This has to be decided in the context of actual circumstances prevailing at any time in a particular place. This balancing of power is like tight rope dancing and has to be learnt through experience.

In Andhra Pradesh, the Samitis and the Zila Parishads have more than justified themselves, particularly in stimulating enthusiasm amongst the villagers through their own leadership. But experience shows that powers of an organisation tend to concentrate in a few hands. This results in inefficiency, delay and lack of support from the people. The President of the Samiti is also the Chairman of all Standing Committees under that Samiti and the Collector of the district is also the ex-officio member and chairman of all Standing Committees constituted under Zila Parishad. This is not conducive to democratic decentralization. Even in England, the members of all local authority committees of this type, choose their own chairmen.

This is one side of the picture. Now take another. After the introduction of Panchayati Raj, the village Munsif has lost his importance and he has no functions to fulfil except of revenue collections. All other functions are allotted to the President of the village panchayat. There is no coordination between them. It will be better if the post of Munsiff is removed and the work of collection of revenue is entrusted to the panchayat president. Till this objective is realised these munsiffs may be made ex-officio members in the panchayat boards so that there is better coordination between the two.

1-4-61 Yours etc.
Mundunuru *N. Bhaskara Rao*
Andhra Pradesh

(Continued on page 12)

I TELL MY OWN STORY—"BLOCK JEEP"

P. Balasubrahmanyam, B.D.O., Adoni

ABOUT EIGHT YEARS back I first made my appearance in the blocks. Since then I have had a varied and rich experience. No village, no hamlet, no road, why, not even a cart track, has been left untraversed by me in my jurisdiction. Look at the mileage covered. Can any one of my age compare with me in this regard? Yet, I am rather unfortunate, for there have been several controversies due to me. My custodian has been a target of envy—of officials and non-officials.

In early times, I was generally packed with neatly dressed young men and women. My horn was a signal for rural folk to gather. Passage of time has acclamatised me to the rural people and today sometimes I go unnoticed in some villages. (Why?) Though in the beginning petrol restriction was not there, ceiling came in slowly. Also my advanced age and delayed sanctions for repairs used to keep me in the "Transport Hospitals" for long periods.

Times changed. Panchayati Raj came in. Believe me, I was almost immediately rejuvenated. The new tribe of people took a very fascinating interest in me. Petrol, repairs, servicing, all were matters of negligible importance. Anything could be had quickly at all times and mind you, anywhere. The composition of my inmates has been one of the most cosmopolitan in character. Men and women, old and young, rural and urban all count among my clients. The Block Development Officer was my sole master in former days. Today, however, I seem to have another—the President—the elected chief. In the days gone-by, the district officers of various departments used to insist on travelling in block vehicle.

The Block Development Officer sitting at the wheel was once proceeding to the District Headquarters. On the way he said to the driver: "Pinned as I am to the office, I am not able to look to several small things. I am told—you are allowing all sorts of people to drive the vehicle. That is against rules (As if B.D.O's driving is in order !) You will be involved. Please be guarded." Then hesitantly the driver asked his supposed master, "Sir, who is my boss—you or the President." Promptly but mildly replied the officer, "Listen, I draw your pay."

These and many more conversations often lead me to believe whether or not this man—I mean the Block Development Officer—is a superfluous creature in the new set up and whether he cannot be easily replaced by an office manager. But that is by the way and a view of one that cannot speak.

Men may come and men may go. In the dynamic world of the day, several changes are witnessed. In the course of these changes, sometimes, several chimeras appear. But I assure you, I will ever remain vigorous, vigilant, never grudging, never grumbling—always rolling, rattling and contributing my mite in this "exciting drama of building new India".

Murukte Solves Drinking Water Problem

THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED by the inhabitants of Murukte, seven miles from Gargoti, in developmental work, which won for the village the prize for the best village in Kolhapur district in Maharashtra State, is a matter for emulation by any well-knit community in rural India.

An impressive item of work done was the tapping of a natural reservoir uphill to meet the villagers' needs of drinking water. For this purpose, they constructed a tank, entirely through shramdan. The next problem was to secure a pipeline to connect it with the reservoir uphill. As the estimated outlay was to be Rs. 7,500, the elected body of village workers levied a donation of four rupees per head on each one of the 350 inhabitants of the village. The balance was collected in the shape of donations from inhabitants who had gone outside in search of livelihood. With the money thus collected, four-inch Hume pipes were purchased and installed.

The supply of good drinking water not only solved a crying problem, but also provided some extra income. The waste water stored in another tank in the vicinity of the first is now sold by auction, the proceeds going towards the development of the village.

Situated as the village is on a slope, drainage does not pose any problem. The roads, however, needed widening and people contributed shramdan. The villagers also made excellent arrangements for street lighting.

VILLAGE SCHOOL

Another important institution, built through people's efforts is the village school.

The village needed such an institution for a long time. As the number of children wanting to go to school increased, the District Board too was impressed by the enthusiasm of the villagers and sanctioned a one-teacher school up to the 4th standard. In the field of social education, the Community Development agency helped the programme of adult literacy. The percentage of literates is now as high as 90, there being only 35 illiterate persons, mostly old men and women, out of a population of 356.

Such has been the craze for education that the villagers utilised the prize money for being the best village in Kolhapur to set up a library, equipped with a radio, which opened new vistas and generated fresh cultural activity.

FARMERS' CLUB

All the 64 khata holders of Murukte are members of the Farmers' Club in the village. At its fortnightly meetings, farmers discuss agricultural problems. It is again this Club that purchases modern agricultural implements.

So strong is the feeling of cohesion that all the khata holders are members of the cooperative credit society of Murukte, which also caters to the needs of Manval. The membership today stands at 189, the capital at Rs. 35,000 and the annual business at Rs. 50,000. It is not without significance that there has been only one instance of outstanding arrears since 1953 and this case relates to a

creditor who, like his surety, is dead.

The 10 acres of land attached to the village Deosthan was divided into 5 units of two acres each for cultivation by some twelve families on a cooperative basis. The hopes of increased agricultural production through cooperation were justified. The yield has gone up. The maximum yield of a unit of two acres has been of the order of 105 maunds of rice.

Inspired by their success in cooperation and developmental work, the villagers have drawn up plans for the installation of a water pipeline for five important public places in the village, for the construction of a water works for Manval, for a bridge across the Chikatra rivulet, so that the children of the village could go across to attend the high school.

* * *

"Operation Road"

Inhabitants of some 17 villages in the Bhuj-Jakhatrana C.D. Block, in Gujerat, now get an extra 50 nP per maund for their agricultural produce, irrespective of the market conditions. The increase is the result of construction of 80 miles of village roads by villagers, 75 miles with meagre Government assistance and 5 miles entirely on their own.

The area around Kalyanpar, Bhadli and Vithon is sandy in parts and hilly in others. A large portion of the 13-mile road connecting these villages is covered by thick jungles. Communication was made further difficult by the steep banks of river Bhuvad which cuts across the road.

Approached in 1952, when the Block was inaugurated, to construct roads, the inhabitants of these villages were not at all receptive. Years passed by, years when larger Block funds were available to augment people's contribution.

Then in 1959, there was a bumper crop of cotton and groundnut. The people of Bhadli sold their entire produce in a lot and undertook to transport it to Kalyanpar. Arrangements to transport the produce by truck, however, failed because the bad road made it impossible for the vehicle to go to Bhadli. The cultivators, consequently, had to take their produce to Kalyanpar by bullock-driven cart. This meant extra cost and more time. Other villages connected with Kalyanpar had rushed their produce and prices too had fallen. It was then that the villagers realised the acute need of good roads and felt sorry to have let slip an opportunity to construct the roads while the Block was in Stage I when grants from Government were bigger. The Block team, then visiting this area, assessed the situation and offered help for the construction of roads if people took the initiative and themselves contributed in cash and labour.

The villagers of Bhadli approached those of Kalyanpar. A programme was drawn up to start the work. Twenty-six cultivators of seven villages willingly parted with more than 10 acres of their cultivable lands for road construction. The Block Overseer worked for 15 days in the hilly region to indicate the most suitable alignments designed to cut short the distance.

The work was started in right earnest in May, 1959. Hundreds of villagers—men as well as women—came forward to help and procured the necessary implements on their own.

The job of cutting the rocks to make a passage was tough. To construct the 9-mile long road, which replaced the 13-mile long road, meant cutting through rocks rising at places to a height of 25 feet to 30 feet. At one place the rock was as high as 38 ft., and it stretched to about 100 ft. Another difficulty was that of diverting the stream which cut across the road and met the river downstream. To divert the stream, so as to ensure that it did not damage the road, it was necessary to dig a canal measuring 100 ft. in length, 6 ft. in width and 4 ft. in depth. These tasks were admirably done.

An idea of the magnitude of the work involved would be given by the fact that the estimated value of labour done on this road by the people of Vithon, Bhadli, Lakmpar and Kalyanpar and other neighbouring villages totals about Rs. 23,800. The work is

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BETTER HEALTH

It is evident that in view of the extremely inadequate medical facility of only one Primary Health Centre with three maternity and Child Welfare Centres provided in each C.D. Block, there is need for more village hospitals built through people's cooperation. Such experiments have been tried with varying degrees of success at some places in the country. In this article is given an outline of the excellent work carried on in this context in about 60 villages around Sriniketan. Now that Panchayati Raj institutions are coming up throughout the country, it should be possible for these bodies to follow up this work by mobilising local resources—Ed.

THE INHABITANTS of over 60 villages around Sriniketan, who are members of health cooperative societies, have shown clearly that it is possible for village communities to improve their health entirely on their own and independently of the Government.

Work on the health cooperatives in these villages which forms part of the Sriniketan C.D. Block, was started long way back in 1933 when under Gurudev Tagore's inspiration, a scheme was drawn up on the model of health cooperatives then started in Yugoslavia.

The six health cooperative societies have since made such remarkable progress that the people benefited by the scheme are opposed to their dispensaries being made sub-centres of the primary health centres. This, for instance, is the case with the Benuria health cooperative society, the executive committee of which, dominated largely by regularly elected youths, opposes such a move. The services rendered by a doctor responsible to them, and in their employment, they say, cannot be matched by those to be rendered by a Government doctor controlled from outside.

The scheme is so popular in some villages that although the two groups of zamindars in Surul do not see eye to eye with each other, they agree on the usefulness of the cooperative health society and lend it their full support.

The cooperative health scheme has aroused the people to a degree that the Brahmins of Goalpara, who form the predominant section of the village, themselves dissuaded a widow from organising a funeral feast, so that the earmarked amount of Rs. 300, could be spent on the building of a dispensary for the health cooperative. The money, which was supplemented by other donations of Rs. 600, led to the construction of a building for the society, adjacent to the village school. The health cooperative society of Benuria has accumulated enough resources to undertake construction of a new building at a cost of Rs. 3,400, half the money from its own resources and the other half by private donations.

SOURCES OF INCOME

The Cooperative principle, "From each according to his capacity to each according to his need" is being implemented with advantage. The membership fee—the family being one unit—is dependent on a member's paying capacity, or the lands cultivated by the family. It varies from Rs. 10 per family per year from the richer sections to Rs. 3 from the poorer sections. Even in regard to the lower limit, there is no rigidity, and members sometimes reduce it to as low as Re. 1 per year per family.

Each member of the cooperative society—that is each family—is entitled to medicines at cost price, the price of simple medicines, *i.e.*, mixture, being limited to 4½ as. for 4 dozes. More expensive medicines are given at cost price which, to Sriniketan institutions, is free of local taxes. The fee for injection is only two annas, the charges for a call to the patient's house being eight annas during the day and one rupee during night.

Non-members are also entitled to all the preventive services free of cost. For the curative services, however, they pay the cost of medicines at the prevailing market rates; and the call fees are double of what the members pay. In the case of very poor families, however, on a certificate from the doctor, funds from various sources at Sriniketan, such as Aruna Ammeta fund, are utilised.

The call fees and the prices of medicines charged are credited to the society which, in

THROUGH COOPERATIVES

addition to the membership fees, also gets donations. In some places, the societies have lands donated voluntarily by members or even non-members. The land's produce augments the society's income. The health cooperative society at Benuria, for instance, has some 7 bighas of land, the income from which totals between Rs. 100 to Rs. 200. Contributions are also now being received from the gram panchayat and the anchal panchayat.

The total income of the cooperative health society of Benuria for the year ending December 1960 was as under:— annual subscription Rs. 1,280; income out of medicines Rs. 2,316; call fees Rs. 453; injection fees Rs. 83; donations from anchal panchayat Rs. 300; donations from members Rs. 16; sale from paddy Rs. 140; miscellaneous Rs. 250—total Rs. 4,838.

Items of expenditure included; Salary of one doctor (LMF) and one compounder, Rs. 2,995; purchase of medicines Rs. 1,390; repairs to the existing building, furniture equipment etc. Rs. 133; expenditure on cultivation of land Rs. 41—total Rs. 4,559. This is in addition to the expenditure on the building of the society's premises, i.e. Rs. 1,396.

DOCTOR'S PERSONALITY

A study of the working of the health cooperatives shows that the success of a cooperative health society depends upon the character and person of the doctor and the degree of cooperation from the village community. Where a doctor became greedy, and wished to cash in on his popularity to set up his private practice, as in Benuria some years ago, the health society faced difficulties. Where, however, the doctor was inspired by idealism, as for instance the doctor of Bandgora-Bolpur, the oldest of the health society, the members preferred to stick to the society rather than to go over to the free service of the primary health centre, even though it is next door. Said Shri Atul Sena, member of the executive committee of the society, "we know our doctor. More than a mere employee he is our own man and a family physician. He is one of us and we trust him. The question of our leaving the society, therefore does not arise."

It has been the universal experience in the villages covered by the scheme that the membership of the society, its income as well as the number of the patients attended to goes down when the doctor is not very popular and gives the impression of being an outsider. At Goaipara village, where the doctor failed to identify himself with the people, the inhabitants preferred to walk the distance of two miles to Sriniketan for the necessary medical services. The doctor ultimately had to leave, and his departure from the village meant a sudden shooting up of the number of patients, the society's income and the membership.

MEMBERSHIP OF SOCIETY

The membership of societies cannot, however, be said to be universal. Societies have had to be wound up in the past when some members got a feeling that their families were healthy and needed not waste the membership fee. A family, however, becomes a member when there is a sickness in one of its members. It does so because it finds it cheaper to get the services from the society. Out of 109 families at Goalpara, only 93 are members. In Benuria proper, only 34 families out of 70 are members. While the Harijan and Santhal families of this village have not paid up their subscription for the current year, all the 7 Harijan families of the nearby village of Islampur are members of the society, which has a membership of 181 families, consisting of 1,256 persons living in 8 villages.

The societies have achieved remarkable success in preventive health measures. Malaria, for instance, has been eradicated. In the Benuria cooperative health society areas, for instance, it has dwindled from 80% of the population in 1944 to 39% in 1952, and to a barely 2% in 1959. The same is true, in a greater or lesser degree, of all the other areas covered by the cooperative health scheme.

This Happened in a Village

Small Hamlet With a Big Message

KAKANWAD is not even a village. It is a small hamlet —part of the village of Degama in Surat District of Gujrat. But it has provided a big example in self-help and co-operative living worthy of emulation by those inhabiting bigger villages and towns.

The people of Kakanwad are agricultural labourers who do not get enough work all the year round. They often go 30 to 40 miles in search of work. Some of them who had cultivated tiny plots of land as tenants were rendered without this means of subsistence as a strange consequence of tenancy reform.

No shopkeeper in his senses would think of taking the risk of selling anything on credit to such hand-to-mouth people.

CO-OPERATIVE GRAM BHANDAR

Leaders in the village found a suitable answer to the problem. That was to organise a co-operative Gram Bhandar. Slowly they built up the Bhandar, each member contributing four annas per week out of the wages earned towards the working capital. The defaulter was asked to pay a penalty of six pies. At the end of the year, the amount "swelled" to Rs. 348.

With this capital they started a shop. The shop was managed so efficiently that the business turnover was Rs. 7,000 at the end of the first year. They could get commodities on credit and a profit of Rs. 750 that year in the bargain. In course of time, the profit increased to Rs. 1,800 in 1960.

In the village, the Gram Bhandar (a shop for daily requirements) occupies an important position. It is a regular meeting place for the village people. It is not only a shop or store; it is the hub of life of the hamlet—a centre which emanates ideas for the betterment of its people.

THE IDEA SPREADS

Inspired by the success of Kakanwad, three other Bhandars have sprung up in other sections of the village. They are also selling sugar and cheap foodgrains. Efforts are being made to transform them into co-operative consumer shops.

The co-operative Mandal which manages the Bhandar has no written constitution and is not dependent on outside aid. The Bhandars work in co-operation with each other.

The Bhandars also encourage cottage industry in the village by purchasing finished products and selling them to traders.

The message of village Degama is spreading fast and farther for the benefit of the rural population.

TRIALS WITHOUT JUDGES

In Yugoslavia are being carried on "TRIALS WITHOUT JUDGES". Disputes are settled through a conciliation committee which is neither a court of law nor a Government body. It bears some resemblance to the manner in which village communities administered Justice in our country in the past. The present article seeks to throw light on this novel experiment in that country which is not without significance for us in view of the Panchayati Raj—**Editor.**

A LARGE NUMBER of disputes which come before law courts start for insignificant reasons—often on account of a harsh word or very small material damages. Owing to such small disputes, documents pile up in the courts of law, citizens waste a lot of their time, pay taxes and lawyers' fees. The courts make their rulings but parties in dispute remain stubborn in their insistance to see "Wrongs undone" which they can usually achieve by a sober talk.

CONCILIATION COMMITTEE

A year or two ago, people in rural areas, where these small disputes are most numerous, began to solve their disagreements in a new way—before a conciliation committee, which is neither a court of law nor a body of state administration, but a social organ whose members are elected by citizens themselves at their meetings, at conferences of voters or meetings of local branches of the Socialist Alliance. The procedure followed before the conciliation committee is very simple. The parties in dispute, or litigants as they are called, appear before their fellow citizens from whom, in an informal talk, freed of all legal formalities, they expect to receive recommendations as to how to solve the causes of their conflict. The object of a careful consideration of every case by the members of the conciliation committee, the litigants and the witnesses is not to pass judgement, but to reach a conciliation, *i.e.*, a solution voluntarily accepted by all parties in dispute.

The conciliation committees usually consider civil cases—property disputes, regulation of field boundaries, compensation of damages made by livestock in the fields, insults, light physical injuries, etc.

The number of conciliation committees is constantly growing. Several such committees may be found in large rural communes. In towns, conciliation committees began to be formed in their smallest sections, the housing communities. In Serbia, the largest constituent republic of Yugoslavia, nearly a thousand conciliation committees have been formed so far, and they have shown themselves to be able to play a significant role in decreasing court cases.

It rarely happens that a party refuses to appear before a conciliation committee or rejects to fulfil accepted obligations. This, to a large measure, is due to the very authority of these institutions, whose members are usually elected from among the leading citizens.

Experience has shown that litigants and witnesses appearing before conciliation committees very rarely use inaccurate data. They cannot distort facts before their neighbours—members of the committees, because they usually know the real state of affairs, i.e. the causes of disputes and their consequences. After all, other citizens are also present who, as impartial observers, follow proceedings, register and weigh every word, every move and watch how individuals fight for justice.

GREAT INTEREST

The interest in the work of conciliation committees is very great. In some cases, all the inhabitants of a village or a housing community in towns take interest. For instance, the minutes of a case considered by a conciliation committee in the village of Golovo in the district of Uzice, show that 242 persons witnessed the committee's proceedings when a dispute between two peasants, Mitar Acimovic and Vidoje Aleksandric, was being considered.

Although conciliation committees are young institutions,

they have already exerted a noticeable influence on every day life. Statistics on court cases show that the number of people who start litigations for insignificant reasons is decreasing. In the territory of only one district, the district of Uzice, conciliation committees solved more than 900 disputes in a year's time. Some of these disputes had earlier been referred to law courts. About 90 percent of all disputes were solved by reconciling parties, i.e. to the satisfaction of all litigants. Herein lies the true significance of the conciliation committees.

COMMUNITY ON THE MOVE

(*Continued from page* 7)

still continuing on this, as also on other roads in the Block.

Even though the road is not yet completed, already inhabitants of about 17 villages, with a population of 7,000, have started making use of it.

As a result of their efforts not only has the value of the agricultural produce of village gone up, but the commodities imported from outside have also become cheaper. Transport is quicker and the construction of roads for the villages has also opened up a window for the villagers to the world outside.

LETTERS

(*Continued from page* 4)

Defective Recruitment

Sir,

One of the main reasons why cooperative movement is not gaining momentum is that it is too much official ridden. Besides, the persons appointed by the Government to look after the cooperatives generally lack the proper spirit and bias for the work. It is generally seen that many posts are filled in by persons irrespective of their desire to serve under this department. The result is that such men do not prove to be good workers. This state of affairs is continuing in spite of the fact that the Rural Credit Survey Committee strongly recommended that men of rural bias and who have strong faith in the movement should be appointed in this department.

20-10-60 Yours etc.
Patna *Mahendra Pratap Singh*
Bihar

What's in a Name?

Sir,

In a letter entitled "Change of designation" published in November, 60 issue of the Panchayati Raj, the correspondent appears to be very anxious for the change of designation from 'Village level worker' to "Extension Organiser". If every one wishes to be a teacher who is to be a student? The best way to teach the villager is by approaching him as a friend rather than as a teacher. In fact the ordinary villager knows much more than what the white collared so-called educated 'Babu' knows about the villages. So I suggest that a village level worker should work hard, show good progress in his work and fight for promotion to a higher rank, rather than run after mere pomp and show. After all, what is there in a name? A rose will smell as sweet even if it is called by any other name.

26-12-60 Yours etc.
P. O. Korakolur *G. Krishna Rao*
Dist. Guntur Ex-President,
Kolakulur Village
Panchayat Board

Sons of the Soil

Muscles Can Do It

Jia Lal Bhatt, B.D.O., Pampore.

IT WAS LATE Autumn. The rays of the setting sun filtered through hand-like leaves of the red Chinar. The villagers were plodding their way back to their homes after their toilsome day. I hastened my pace over the dusty road which led me to village *LELHAR* which was by now completely covered by the evening dusk. I was conducted to the hut where I had to pass the night. As a rule in Kashmir, all officials have to put up in Panchayat Ghars during their tours, but in this village the Panchayat Ghar had been washed away by the floods in 1957.

It was 8 p.m. We squatted on the grass-mat and had our meals. Meanwhile villagers, wrapped up in woollen blankets, carrying Kangries* in their Phirans,† gradually joined us. In order to make the company more cordial I asked each villager about his welfare. Last came the turn of Amir Lone—the Sarpanch. He was happy to inform me that they had harvested a bumper crop this year.

"What about your last year's crop?", I enquired.

"It is exactly after ten years that we have been fortunate to harvest a crop. The past years of continued floods were years of anguish and misery for us. We suffered loss of crops, cattle, houses and even human lives," he replied and continued with a deep sigh, "The damages of flood have pushed us down the abyss of poverty and misery. Friends and relatives turned their back upon us. They did not condescend even to exchange salutations with us. It is thus we came to realise that poverty is a sin which is detested equally by man and God". Amir Lone got so overwhelmed with emotion that he could not speak further, but Abdul Ahmad, Gram Sevak, took up the thread of the woeful tale and said, "Whenever the nearby river Jehlum is in spate, its waters engulf the whole area. Once the area gets inundated it remains submerged for months together with the result that crops rot, houses collapse and everything is swept off with the current, except human beings, who either take refuge on elevated places or move away in boats to places of safety. This is the fate of six villages with a population of nearly three thousand. Two and a half thousand acres of land get affected. Famine, disease, beggary and many other evils hold them in their grip. It is a sad story..." Absolute dejection was writ large on everyone's face. "The embankments of river Jehlum are raised on your village side. Where from does flood water come in?", I asked.

"The river side is no doubt safe, but there is one gap, three miles long, on eastern side of the village. It has no protection bund", replied Lone after removing the skull cap from his bald head.

"What remedy do you propose for this?" I asked.

"Thrice we met the authorities in deputation to raise the bund, but without any result. Yesterday we learnt that the Irrigation Department is going to take up this work in the Third Five Year Plan", said Amir Lone with a twinkle in his eye.

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* (1) *Handy firepots which Kashmiries use to warm themselves in winter.*

† (2) *Local costume of Kashmiries.*

"Then it means that you have no alternative but to wait".

"Wait we must, what else can we do, if Sirkar does not help us?" said vociferous Rahim Lone who sat near the Gram Sevak.

"You are yourself Sirkars, if you could understand what democracy means. However, I will let you know this on my next visit. Meanwhile, tell me Amir Lone, "What was your loss during the flood?"

"Rupees two thousand approximately", replied Amir Lone.

"Are you ready to sacrifice rupees twenty to save your rupees two thousand?" Gladly I can forego rupees two hundred, if I could save rupees two thousand, but please let me know clearly what do you mean?" asked Amir Lone.

To make the conversation more pleasant, I offered a cigarette to Amir Lone and said, "You know fully well that there is no remedy other than raising a bund to fill up this gap. This work needs no skill, no bricks, nor any mortar. You have simply to take up the spade and work for nearly twenty days for which you would otherwise earn Rs. twenty as daily wages. If only 800 persons from your adult population follow your example, the required protection bund will be raised in twenty days only".

Hearing this simple proposition, the party became all attention. After about a minute's silence the vociferous Rahim Lone said, "The bund is to be constructed over a distance of three miles. For us it is practically impossible. Besides, it requires cooperation from all, which we lack".

"Impossible? Nothing is impossible in this world. It is man who fathomed the deepest seas; who scaled the highest peaks. After all we are also men. What we lack is an iron will and strong determination. Let us do or die".

It was by now getting late. Amir Lone and others left the place with the promise that they will inform me about their final decision in the morning.

The morning dawned. The distant snow capped peaks glistened in the glow of the rising sun. The Muzzian broke the calm atmosphere of the village by calling aloud "Allah o' Akbar" from the Minaret of the village mosque. After offering prayers all the villagers came to me and with one voice assured me that they welcomed my proposal with all their heart. Amir Lone who headed the party assured me further that all the villagers had taken an oath in the mosque that they will not rest until they had completed the bund, irrespective of any help from the Sirkar. I heaved a sigh of relief, for, my aim was nearly fulfilled.

Exactly after twenty days. the Minister of State for Dehat Sudhar inspected the three miles long bund constructed by the villagers on purely voluntary basis. He was happy and extremely lavish in expressing praise for the work done by the villagers who had realised their cherished dream and that through human muscles alone. Next day a representative from Radio Srinagar came and interviewed Amir Lone, his co-workers and myself. When villagers of LELHAR heard Amir Lone on Radio their joy knew no bounds. He was indeed happy when he concluded his radio talk, which resounded throughout the valley, with these words: "Muscles can do it."

Around the States

BIHAR

Panchayats and Revenue Work

THE BIHAR GOVERNMENT has decided to give the work of rent collection to all Gram Panchayats in the rural area from the end of May this year. The mutation (Dakhil Kharij) work in the rural areas would also be done by Gram Panchayats. It has also been decided that all contracts for Development work in the C.D. Block area would be given to Gram Panchayats failing which the co-operative societies would be given the contract.

DELHI

More Powers for Panchayats

It is proposed to invest Panchayat Samitis in Delhi with new financial and executive powers to enable them to play a greater role in the rural reconstruction programme. The panchayats will be required to run the water supply and sewage systems. The cost will be shared by the Corporation and the Panchayats.

KERALA

Panchayat without Members

It is understood that a panchayat without members exists at Vilvattam in the Trichur District of Kerala. Some members of the panchayat have resigned and membership of the others has lapsed.

MAHARASHTRA

Democratic Decentralisation

A three-tier administrative structure with clearcut division of responsibility at the district and village panchayat levels has been recommended by the Committee on Democratic Decentralisation set up by the Government of Maharashtra.

PUNJAB

Punjab Compulsory Service Act

Tehsildars and Naib-tehsildars have been authorised by the Government to exercise the powers of a Development Officer under the Punjab Compulsory Service Act. This authorisation is effective only in those areas which are not covered by development blocks. Until now, it may be recalled, about 168 out of the 228 proposed blocks covering the entire State have been set up.

The Act empowers the Government to secure compulsory labour, from every able-bodied person for removal of waterlogging in the areas notified for this purpose. The Development Officers have been given powers to prepare lists of persons liable for compulsory service, decide objections against inclusion in the list, grant exemption and determine the nature of the services skilled or unskilled which each person is required to render.

UTTAR PRADESH

Women Sweep the Polls

Women of Deitikar village of the Goshainganj development block in Lucknow district made history recently by bagging all the 15 seats of the gaon sabha in the panchayat elections. A woman was also elected Pradhan.

* * *

U.P. ELECTIONS

The Panchayat elections have just ended in U.P. This involved roughly an electorate of more than three crores spread over 1,29,923 constituencies in 46 districts of the plains of the State. They were required to elect one pradhan each for 66,502 gaon sabhas and 10,62,888 members, out of whom 2,33,669 were Scheduled Caste members.

Reports from 45 districts show that 28,157 pradhans, or roughly 40 per cent of the total, and 5,80,387 panchayat members, more than 50 per cent, were returned unopposed.

Indicative of the interest taken by the people in the elections is the fact that on the average nearly 80 per

(Continued on page 16)

USEFUL TIPS

SPEND LESS, GAIN MORE

IN OUR COUNTRY, there is popular belief that cotton seed cake is much less nutritive than the whole cotton seed. But this is not a fact. Experiments carried out at the Indian Veterinary Research Institute have shown that their nutritive value is the same for work bullocks. Besides, no significant difference is observed in milk yield and fat content. On the other hand, cotton seed cake is more easily digestible. The farmers will be well-advised to spend less and gain more by using cotton seed cake as the cattle feed in preference to the cotton seed itself.

PHANGLA—A CHEAP GREEN MANURE

Phangla is a profusely growing forest vegetation in Nasik district in Maharashtra. This has proved to be the cheapest and most effective green manure in tracts of heavy rainfall and where transplanted paddy is grown. It has come in handy since Sannhemp and Dhaincha the usual sources of green manure do not grow to their full stature in rainy places.

NEW GRAM VARIETY

Going by the name of Co. 1, the new variety of gram being distributed to farmers in Madras State gives 700 to 800 pounds of grain per acre, which means that farmer gets 200 pounds gram extra or Rs. 40 per acre as additional income. The crop, sown with the onset of the North-east Monsoon, is ready for harvest in 120 days.

SAVING IN WHEAT SEED

The seed-rate for irrigated wheat can be safely reduced to 24 seers per acre, thus effecting a considerable saving in wheat seed. Farmers normally use a maund of seed per acre.

GETTING THE BEST FROM POTATO

Research, has shown that all commercial potato varieties benefit very well when given nitrogen, and that among the nitrogenous fertilizers, ammonium sulphate is the most suited. It also needs phosphate and potash for best yields. The crop has to be given a combination of organic manures with chemical fertilizers.

Regarding cultural practices for the best results, the crop should be given a spacing of 18 inches between rows and 9 inches between rows and tubers in soils of average fertility, using 1½ ounce seed-pieces for seed.

GETTING RID OF POHLI

Pohli has been a continuing nuisance to the farmers in the Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. An easy and effective method of getting rid of this as well as other weeds was recently tried in the villages of Delhi. 2,4-D a cheap Chemical was sprayed on the field where the wheat crop was standing. One pound of the medicine was used in 60 gallons of water and sprayed on the crop taking care to see that it reached all the weeds in the field. As a result Pohli and other weeds were completely eradicated and the wheat yield was also increased.

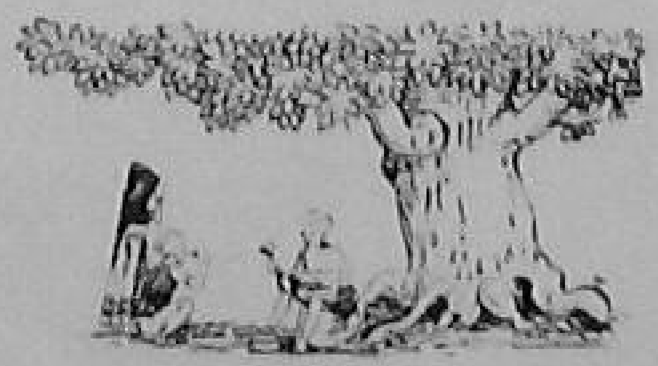
AROUND THE STATES

(Continued from page 15)

cent of the electorate exercised its right of franchise. At some places, the polling was as much as 95 per cent. There was equal participation by men and women. Although the election of pradhans was by secret ballot and by the marking system—a system which is yet to be tried in the general election, the invalid votes hardly came to 4 per cent.

The staff deployed on each day of the polling roughly averaged two lakhs. On some days it was three lakhs.

A unique feature of the elections was that income from the sale of nomination papers was more than the cost of operations by several lakhs of rupees.



LEAD KINDLY LIGHT

The harvesting season is on. The farmers all over the country are busy in harvesting, thrashing and collecting the golden grain in gunny bags to be stored at home or sold in the market.

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